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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 1230

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: PRE-ELECTION SURVEY: THE MOOD OF THE NORTH

SUMMARY: THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF REPORT ON THE
PRE-ELECTION MOOD IN VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE COUNTRY. WITH
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS A SCANT TWO MONTHS OFF, THE
NORTH IS PRIMARILY PREOCCUPIED WITH ECONOMIC CONCERNS. HOPES
FOSTERED BY INCREASED POLITICAL STABILITY ARE TEMPERED BY
THE SLOW PACE OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY, THE IMPACT OF AS MANY AS
300,000 RETURNEES FROM THE FORMER AFRICAN COLONIES, AND A
LINGERING MISTRUST OF LISBON AUTHORITIES. WHILE ELECTION
PREDICTIONS WOULD BE PREMATURE, SEVERAL IMPRESSIONS COME THROUGH;

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-- THE PPD IS STILL THE LEADING PARTY IN THE REGION

AND LIKELY TO REMAIN SO DESPITE LOSSES TO A RESURGENT CDS.

-- THE CDS IS GAINING MOMENTUM AND SHOULD SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE ITS PERCENTAGE IN MOST DISTRICTS.

-- THE PS IS ON THE DEFENSIVE. IT WILL BE HURT BY GROWING POLITICAL ACTIVISM BY ORGANIZED FARMERS AND RETURNEES, BUT NOT AS MUCH AS ITS RIVALS PREDICT.

-- THE COMMUNISTS AND PARTIES TO THE LEFT OF THE SOCIALISTS WILL LOSE EVEN MORE OF THE SCANT SUPPORT THEY CURRENTLY ENJOY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FOLLOWING REPORT IS BASED UPON INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS DURING A FEB 16-20 VISIT TO FIVE NORTHERN DISTRICTS BY AN EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER, ACCOMPANIED BY OUR CONSUL IN OPORTO.

2. OVERVIEW: ONE COMES AWAY FROM A SHORT BUT CONCENTRATED EXPOSURE TO THE NORTH WITH SEVERAL DISTINCT IMPRESSIONS.

-- THERE IS WIDESPREAD SATISFACTION THAT THE LEFTIST GRAB FOR POWER ON NOV 25 WAS DEFEATED AND THAT THE NORTH PLAYED A MAJOR -- NORTHERNERS SAY DECISIVE -- ROLE IN REVERSING THE STEADY MARCH TO THE LEFT.

-- THERE IS HOPE THAT GROWING POLITICAL STABILITY WILL LEAD TO SPEEDY ECONOMIC RECOVERY.
BUT OPTIMISM IS TEMPERED BY:

-- THE SLOW PACE OF RECOVERY.

-- THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF AS MANY AS 300,000 RETURNEES.

-- LINGERING MISTRUST OF LISBON AUTHORITIES.

THERE IS GROWING INTEREST IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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ELECTIONS, NOW LESS THAN TEN WEEKS AWAY. ECONOMIC ISSUES, HOWEVER, TEND TO BE UPPERMOST IN THE MINDS OF EVEN THE POLITICAL ELITES.

3. ELECTION PROSPECTS: NO RELIABLE POLLS ARE AVAILABLE, AND PREDICTIONS WOULD BE PREMATURE. BUT SEVERAL TENDENCIES ARE APPARENT:

-- THE PPD REMAINS THE PRINCIPAL PARTY BUT HAS SLIPPED IN SOME DISTRICTS; THE DEFECTION OF WIDELY-RESPECTED LIBERAL DISSIDENTS WILL HURT, PARTICULARLY IN THE OPORTO AREA.

-- THE CDS, MOST OBSERVERS AGREE, IS GAINING STRENGTH.

-- THE PS WILL BE HARD PRESSED TO HOLD ITS OWN. BUT IT WOULD BE MISLEADING TO SAY THAT THERE HAS BEEN A SHARP MOVE TO THE RIGHT IN THE NORTH. THE REGION HAS BEEN AND REMAINS CONSERVATIVE, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREAS OUTSIDE OPORTO AND COIMBRA. THE APRIL 1975 CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS IN THE NINE DISTRICTS NORTH OF THE MONDEGO ONLY CONFIRMED THIS. (PPD, 35.4 PERCENT; PS, 33.8 PERCENT; AND CDS, 11.7 PERCENT. IF OPORTO AND COIMBRA RESULTS ARE NOT INCLUDED, HOWEVER, THE RESULTS WERE: PPD 40.6 PERCENT; PS, 26.7 PERCENT; AND CDS, 14.7 PERCENT).

NEW POLITICAL FORCES

4. RETURNEES, A NEW FACTOR: THE PRESENCE OF ALMOST 300,000 RETURNEES IS A SIGNIFICANT NEW FACTOR IN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE NORTH. IN MOST OF THE DISTRICTS VISITED -- VIANA DO CASTELO, BRAGA, VILA REAL, VISEU, AND AVEIRO -- THE RETURNEES CONSTITUTE ABOUT TEN PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. IN SEVERAL DISTRICTS -- BRAGA AND VILA REAL -- THEY APPROACH TWENTY PERCENT. ACCORDING TO IARN OFFICIALS, THE TYPICAL RETURNEE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD IN THE NORTH IS WHITE, MIDDLE-AGED, AND LOWER MIDDLE-CLASS; URBAN-ORIENTED; AND GIVEN TO SMALL COMMERCIAL OR MINOR BUREAUCRATIC OCCUPATIONS. WELFARE FACILITIES -- PRIMARILY PROVIDED BY IARN AND THE

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RED CROSS -- HAVE BEEN WOEFULLY INADEQUATE TO THE TASK OF PROVIDING FOR THE FLOOD OF RETURNEES. THE BULK, 80 PERCENT OR MORE, ARE HOUSED TEMPORARILY WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS, NEAR THE PRINCIPAL SECONDARY POPULATION CENTERS. RETURNEES AS A GROUP TEND TO BE MORE ACTIVE THAN THE POPULATIONS AMONG WHOM THEY HAVE SETTLED. WITH SOME OFFICIAL AND CHURCH SUPPORT, THEY HAVE ORGANIZED AN ELABORATE, BUT AS YET LARGELY INEFFECTIVE, STRUCTURE OF INTERLOCKING COMMITTEES, FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO THE NATIONAL LEVEL.

5. OPINIONS VARY WIDELY AS TO WHAT THE ELECTION IMPACT OF THE RETURNEES WILL BE.

-- CDS AND PPD SUPPORTERS BELIEVE THE RETURNEES WILL

VOTE CONSERVATIVELY; BOTH PARTIES ARE TAILORING THEIR CAMPAIGNS TO APPEAL TO RETURNEE SENTIMENTS.

-- PS LEADERS, SUCH AS MANUEL DE SILVA ALMEIDA, THE CIVIL GOVERNOR OF VISEU, CLAIM THAT OVERRIDING ECONOMIC ISSUES -- UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING -- WILL FAVOR THE SOCIALISTS AS THE PARTY OF THE "HAVE-NOTS." AND, IN ANY CASE, RETURNEE VOTES WILL DIVIDE ALONG LINES SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE GENERAL POPULATION.

-- RETURNEE SPOKESMEN ARE NON-COMMITTAL BUT MOST OF THOSE INTERVIEWED, INCLUDING FERNANDO BORGES, A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FROM VILA REAL, CLEARLY LEAN TOWARD THE CDS. RETURNEES UNIFORMLY COMPLAIN OF BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE AND ALLEGED GOVERNMENT INCOMPETENCE. THEY ARE BITTERLY CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DECOLONIZATION POLICY WHICH MANY OF THEM REGARD AS A "SELLOUT" BY THE PS AND MARIO SOARES. THEIR RESENTMENT SPILLS OVER TO THE PPD WHICH, BECAUSE OF ITS ROLE IN GOVERNMENT, IS ALSO BLAMED FOR THE PRECIPITATE GOP COLONIAL WITHDRAWAL. ONLY THE CDS SEEMS TO ESCAPE CRITICISM.

6. THE FARMERS: THE PORTUGUESE CONFEDERATION OF FARMERS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LISBON 1230

(CAP) HAS PLAYED HEAVILY UPON NORTHERN FEARS AND CONSERVATIVE SENTIMENTS TO ENCOURAGE OPPOSITION TO THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM. CAP HAS EFFECTIVELY MOBILIZED SMALL AND MEDIUM FARMERS IN THE NORTH TO OPPOSE ALLEGED ABUSES IN THE SOUTH. THE FARMERS' ORGANIZATION HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED ITS MUSCLE THROUGH A SERIES OF LARGE SCALE DEMONSTRATIONS. ITS ACTIVITIES TO DATE, INCLUDING STRONG ATTACKS ON PS AGRICULTURE MINISTER LOPES CARDOSO, HAVE PUT THE SOCIALISTS ON THE DEFENSIVE. MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT INCREASED POLITICAL ACTIVISM BY THE FARMERS WILL BENEFIT THE PARTIES TO THE RIGHT OF THE PS. BOTH THE CDS AND THE PPD HAVE STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE FARMERS' PROTESTS. EVEN THE MINISCULE PORTUGUESE MONARCHIST PARTY IS COURTING THE MILITANT
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FARMERS. BUT, TO DATE, THERE HAS BEEN NO FORMAL PARTY ENDORSEMENT BY THE FARMERS. ACCORDING TO AMADEU SA MENESES, A MEMBER OF THE CAP NATIONAL DIRECTORATE FROM VISEU AND AN ARDENT MONARCHIST PARTY SUPPORTER, NONE IS ANTICIPATED.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS

7. THE MILITARY: THE ARMED FORCES IN THE NORTH REFLECT THE CONSERVATIVE ENVIRONMENT FROM WHICH THEY ARE LARGELY DRAWN. MOST OF THE ENLISTED PERSONNEL ARE RECRUITED LOCALLY AND NORMALLY SERVE IN UNITS NEAR THEIR HOMES. OFFICERS HAVE ALSO TRADITIONALLY BEEN ASSIGNED WITHIN THE REGION, ALTHOUGH THE ARMY IS SHIFTING TO A POLICY OF MORE VARIED GEOGRAPHIC ASSIGNMENTS. LOCAL RECRUITMENT AND ASSIGNMENT IS VIRTUALLY THE RULE WITHIN THE POLICE AND NATIONAL GUARD. MILITARY MEN IN THE NORTH TEND TO BE FULLY INTEGRATED INTO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. FOR EXAMPLE, COL SARAIVA, COMMANDANT OF THE NCO TRAINING SCHOOL IN LAMEGO, IS HONORARY PRESIDENT OF THE FRUIT AND WINE MARKETING COOPERATIVE WHICH SERVES THE SURROUNDING REGION. IN SHORT, MILITARY MEN BOTH REFLECT AND REINFORCE THE CONSERVATIVE LOCAL SOCIETY IN WHICH THEY RESIDE.

8. MILITARY MEN IN THE NORTH VIEW UPCOMING ELECTIONS

WITH MIXED EMOTIONS. THEY SEE THEM AS ESSENTIAL FOR A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY BUT ALSO AS A POTENTIAL DESTABILIZING FACTOR. THE PRESENCE OF SO MANY RETURNEES AND THEIR ATTENDANT PROBLEMS IS AN ADDITIONAL SOURCE OF TENSION AS WELL AS A DAILY REMINDER OF MILITARY FAILURES IN THE AFRICAN WARS. MAJOR BRANDAO, THE POLICE COMMANDER IN BRAGA, WHERE A SERIES OF BOMBINGS RECENTLY OCCURRED, EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT GOP RECOGNITION OF THE MPLA COULD LEAD TO FURTHER INCIDENTS. THE PREVAILING SENTIMENT WAS SUMMED UP WELL BY NORTHERN REGION MILITARY COMMANDER PIRES VELOSO WHEN HE SAID: "ELECTIONS, YES, BUT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE."

9. THE CHURCH: THE NORTH HAS LONG BEEN THE STRONGHOLD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN PORTUGAL. BUT THE CHURCH IN THE NORTH IS AN INSTITUTION IN DECLINE. IT IS NOT
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ATTRACTING ENOUGH PRIESTS TO PERPETUATE ITSELF. THE SEMINARY IN BRAGA, TRADITIONALLY THE NATION'S PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF NEW CLERGYMEN, ORDAINED ONLY ONE PRIEST DURING THE PAST YEAR. IN 1974, IT PRODUCED ONLY THREE. CHURCH-LED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ARE FARING LITTLE BETTER. THE JESUIT-RUN PHILOSOPHY SCHOOL IN BRAGA CURRENTLY HAS 75 STUDENTS, DOWN FROM AN ENROLLMENT OF MORE THAN 400 BEFORE APRIL 25, 1974. AS FATHER ROGUE CABRAL, A PROFESSOR AT THE SCHOOL, PUT IT: "PEOPLE ARE BEING FORCED TO LIVE IN SIN BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF PRIESTS TO PERFORM ESSENTIAL SACRAMENTS."

9. WITH A FEW NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS, E.G., THE OUTSPOKEN ARCHBISHOP OF OPORTO, THE HEIRARCHY IN THE NORTH HAS BEEN OUT OF STEP WITH THE APRIL 25 REVOLUTION. REPORTS OF CHURCH TIES WITH RIGHT-WING OPPOSITION GROUPS -- ELP AND MDLP -- ARE FREQUENTLY HEARD. THE CONSERVATIVE ARCHBISHOP OF BRAGA'S ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, DECON EDUARDO DE MELO PEIXOTO, ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD FREQUENTLY IN THE PAST BEEN IN TOUCH WITH BOTH SPINOLA AND ALPOIM CALVAO.

10. SOME OF THE MORE CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS OF THE HEIRARCHY HAVE ALSO MADE COMMON CAUSE WITH SIMILARLY-INCLINED RETURNEES. BOTH GROUPS VIEW THE PRECIPITATE PORTUGUESE WITHDRAWAL FROM AFRICA AS A "NATIONAL BETRAYAL." SOCIALIST LEADER MARIO SOARES IS HIGH ON THE LIST OF THOSE THEY HOLD RESPONSIBLE. SO FAR, THE CHURCH HAS CAREFULLY REFRAINED FROM MAKING ANY STATEMENTS WHICH MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS PARTISAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE CAMPAIGN. BUT THE POTENTIAL IS THERE. BOTH THE PPD AND CDS LEADERS ARE WELL AWARE OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE PARISH PRIEST

IN ISOLATED RURAL AREAS. BOTH PARTIES HAVE, WITH
CONSIDERABLE EFFECT, STRESSED THEIR ASSOCIATIONS WITH
THE CHURCH. SOARES AND THE SOCIALISTS HAVE BEEN HARD
PRESSED TO COMPETE, PARTICULARLY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

11. CONCLUSIONS: TRENDS IN THE NORTH DO NOT READILY
TRANSLATE INTO ELECTORAL SUPPORT FOR A SINGLE POLITICAL
PARTY. VOTERS IN THE NORTH, LIKE THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS
ELSEWHERE, RESPOND TO A VARIETY OF APPEALS. NEVERTHELESS,
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SOME GENERAL IMPRESSIONS COME THROUGH:

-- THE CDS IS GAINING MOMENTUM AND SHOULD SUBSTANTIALLY
INCREASE ITS PERCENTAGE IN MOST DISTRICTS.
-- THE PS IS ON THE DEFENSIVE. GROWING POLITICAL ACTIVISM
BY BOTH THE FARMERS AND THE RETURNEES WILL HURT THE
SOCIALISTS, BUT NOT AS MUCH AS EITHER THE SPOKESMEN FOR
THOSE GROUPS OR RIVAL POLITICAL PARTIES PREDICT.
-- THE PPD, TO AN EXTENT, IS ALSO ON THE DEFENSIVE. IT
IS STILL THE LEADING PARTY IN THE NORTH. BUT IF CURRENT
TRENDS CONTINUE IT COULD SEE SOME OF ITS PREVIOUS CON-
SERVATIVE SUPPORT ERODED BY A RESURGENT CDS.
-- IT IS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION, THAT THE COMMUNISTS
AND OTHER PARTIES TO THE LEFT OF THE SOCIALISTS WILL
LOSE EVEN MORE OF THEIR DWINDLING SUPPORT AND WILL BE
SWEEPED OUT OF APPOINTIVE POSITIONS IN ALL DISTRICT AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS.
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